

THE
ANIMATED
SKELETON,



IN TWO VOLUMES.

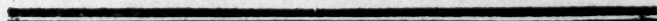


" I oft have fought,
" With friendly tender of some worthier service,
" To win him from his temper, but he shuns
" All offers—
" Is there cause for this?
" For sin without temptation, calm cool villany—
" Deliberate mischief, unimpassioned lust,
" And smiling murder——"

GUSTAVUS VASA.

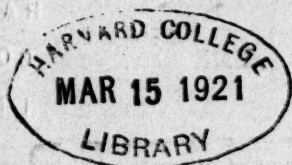


VOL. I.



LONDON:
PRINTED AT THE
Minerva-Press,
FOR WILLIAM LANE, LEADENHALL-STREET.

1798,



G. F. PARKER

(2 vols)

17438.47.15

THE
PREFACE.

THE fashionable style of
Novels has been for
some time dressed in the garb
of fiction; and the title of
“a story founded on facts,”

has been universally received with pleasure.

I pretend not here to produce facts for my foundation : through the regions of imagination only have I strayed to gather those materials which arose spontaneously, whichever way I moved. To me it has ever appeared, that turning truth into romance was divesting it of its real charms. The stomach long habituated to the high-seasoned dish, turns with dislike and loathing, from
the

the plain and wholesome food. The gloss of fiction leads astray the mind, and when a fact is mentioned, it only recollects it as ornamented by the romantic writer. It is not to be supposed a very young person will give up the sweet and alluring recitals of a Reeve, a White, or a Lee, to travel through a Smollet, a Hume, or a Rapin. Ask them whence they would draw their historic information, and they lead you to the windings of a Re-

cess,

A 4

cess, or present you to the Knight of the Face. Perhaps, with Richard Cœur de Lion, they produce a black cat, or, when speaking of his return from imprisonment, exclaim, " Oh aye, it was then he met with the Hero of the Pitcher."

I am well convinced that History can receive no additional beauty from fiction, nor have I the presumption to think I am capable of giving it any, could it be received from

from art. If my story has any merit, it consists in its brevity, in its being entirely invention, and without a sentiment intended to corrupt the heart.

The reign of Hugh Capet presented to my mind the overgrown power of his nobles; and there alone have I glanced at reality, except in attempting to adapt my story to the manners of the times.

If

If my sentiments are erroneous, let it be imputed to an unformed judgment and a powerless pen, which has never been directed by a wish to injure.

Now I pray you, good readers, do not quarrel with the kitten, which plays its unoffending antics to divert you — it is the best it can do :— its abilities are not equal to its will; and if you have more rationality, that is your hap-

happiness, not the kitten's fault; be pleased then with its intention, and pardon its weakness.

Now I pray you, good readers, do not quarrel with the kitten, which plays its unoffending antics to divert you — it is the best it can do — its abilities are not equal to its will; and if you have more rationality, that is your

COUNT RICHARD.

THE ANIMATED SKELETON.

DISMALLY was the corpse
howling round the cottage of
Jacquemart, the howl beat in at the
after waiting, which served for win-
dows - it fell on the ill-formed roof,
and marked through it. The inha-
bitants of the peasant creep close to their
doors, but terrified and nearly cold.

COUNT RICHARD,

OR,

THE ANIMATED SKELETON.

DISMALLY was the tempest howling round the cottage of Jacquemar; the snow beat in at the osier watling, which served for windows: it fell on the ill-formed roof, and melted through it. The infant sons of the peasant crept close to their father, half terrified and nearly cold.

THE ANIMATED SKELETON.

"Do, papa, wrap us in your cloke, and keep us warm," cried the eldest:—"Tell us a story," said the youngest, "until mamma comes home, and gives us some victuals. Why don't she come?"

"Alas," replied Jacquemar, whose bosom was filled with anxiety for the return of his Dunifleda, "my love, I know not; she went to seek provisions; and if not more fortunate than usual, you will be obliged to go to sleep without a supper. Perhaps she is staying to procure some money."

"Why do not you go and bring her home, papa?" "My dear child, she went to sell some cheese, but I know not whither she turned." The sound of a person who tried to enter at the

wicket-door of the cottage, made the hearts of the children beat quick with hope and joy. "Oh, it is mamma! it is mamma!"—"Ah, my dears, she would enter immediately; but I will go and see."—The cottage of Jacquemar was divided into two rooms; one in which they slept and lived; and a smaller one, in which they penned a goat: the entrance into the dwelling being through the smaller, they could not discover who was coming; but on arriving at the wicket, Jacquemar found it was indeed Dunifeda. Her strength had but just supported her to the door, which she had made an ineffectual effort to open. Cold, fear, and weakness, had rendered her hands

4. THE ANIMATED SKELETON.

too much benumbed to perform their office: that being done by Jacquemar, she attempted to rush in; but before she could accomplish her purpose she fainted on the bosom of her husband. Jacquemar, in his arms, carried her to the fire (which the snow had nearly extinguished) but the sudden alarm and grief that penetrated his heart, prevented his lending her any other assistance. Almost reduced to equal torpor with his wife, he could only press her to his bosom and gaze upon her face, which was bloody; and her clothes were wet and torn. The youngest infant rubbed his mother's hands, to restore their warmth, whilst the weeping
eldest

THE ANIMATED SKELETON.

5

eldest raked the few embers on the hearth together, and, after warming his own scanty coverings, crawled up and wrapped them round his mother's shoulders. Long was it before Duffleda discovered any signs of re-animation; but at length opening her eyes, she drew a sigh; she beheld her husband and children. Surprise first warmed her countenance; the surprise which we feel when after being separated a few moments from the dominions of reason, we return from the illusions of a distempered brain to the regions of reality. Thought returning, she faintly smiled, and softly said, but in an agitated whisper, "Fly, my Jacquemar, let us fly to

6 THE ANIMATED SKELETON.

some distant cottage imme——”

The sounds died upon her lips, the effort overcame her, and she again became insensible. Her miserable husband and his little ones each uttered a cry of horror. At that moment a figure rushed in, wrapped up in a long cloke, and his features covered; “Fly Jacquemar, fly to the cottage of Gnodern; here certain ruin awaits your stay: fly this instant, and there rest quiet until you hear further from Alwin.” Not remaining to listen to their interrogatories, the figure, after having uttered the above words, swiftly made his exit from their presence.

“ Gracious

“Gracious Parent of the universe,” exclaimed Jacquemar, “what can I have done to merit this? and who can be my enemy?”

Lost in astonishment, he hung over Dunifieda, who at length began to recover: he entreated her eagerly to declare the cause of the stranger’s advice and appearance, but more of her own exclamation and mournful situation, ‘Oh my love, cause me not to waste my little strength in the explanation: let me save it, that, with your assistance, I may before it is too late, escape to the cottage of Grodern with my poor little ones! Oh, we must not delay one moment!’

THE ANIMATED SKELETON.

At that instant entered Grodern himself, attended by his son.—“My friends,” said he, “I am come with Edgar to assist you in your removal: Alwin has been at my home, and has sent me hither.”

“Who is Alwin?”

“Stay not for questions—Dunifieda, lean on the arm of your husband, and on my son’s; I will lead the children.”

Exerting her utmost strength, Dunifieda supported as he desired, slowly walked from their dwelling, scarcely able to crawl on, although aided
by

by the two peasants.—The shivering infants could not long creep through the snow; the old man carried the biggest in his arms, and Edgar was obliged to bear the other: thus, at last cold, faint, and weary, they arrived at the hospitable shelter. The ancient wife of Grodern carried Dunfleda to her own bed (which consisted of moss and long dried grass, which they had gathered from the sides of the forest, covered with coarse linen) and quitted the room, that she might not disturb her repose.

The astonished Jacquemar now demanded an explanation; which was only thus partially complied with by Grodern,

Groderu, who addressed him as follows:—“About a quarter of an hour before you saw me, Edward, one of the attendants belonging to the lady of Duke Albert, came into my cottage, and earnestly entreated me to receive you and your family this night, and to hasten and encourage your departure, for that great mischief would befall you if I refused, or even hesitated a few hours! Tell them, added he, if they delay, that Alwin sent you. Although he was disguised, I easily recognized him to be Edward; determining to give him no suspicion, after I had made this discovery, I immediately attended on you.”

egbēl

‘ Alas !

Alas! I fear some treachery," replied Jacquemar; "the Duke is a great enemy to all the poor vassals in his territories, who have any handsome females belonging to them. — I fear for my poor Dunifleda! and I believe I shall soon be made more miserable, because I love her!"

"Ah, Jacquemar," said the old man, "the Duke is a good prince, and would be the friend of all his poor vassals, if his lady would let him: she is so bad, that I know not whether day or night has been the greatest witness of her atrocities. You must take care and conceal my knowledge

ledge of the false Alwin, and also my opinion of his mistress.

“ They say those terrible ghosts in the castle are all caused by his great wickedness.”

‘ Rather say, they appear to be in time the discovery of hers. But hush, these are not subjects for the comments of the poor and helpless. Even in my own cottage I shudder, lest being overheard I should draw her anger and vengeance down upon me.

‘ Perhaps

‘Perhaps in the morning my Dumbleda may be able to tell who is to be blamed.’

“We must all use our caution; the disguise of Edward calls upon us likewise to be disguised, at least in speech and manner. Under the sway of a bad master, honesty is of no avail with a poor cottager, whose virtues are as silent and solemn monitors against the great man’s vices, and are received and treated as high insults would be. When the furious lady of Duke Albert aims at our destruction, subtilty alone opposed to subtilty, can save us from her malice, unless we betake ourselves to immediate flight.

I have

24 THE ANIMATED SKELETON.

I have long been the marked object of her wrath."

'Alas, my friend, what could have been the cause? or how are you enabled to know it?'

"Female depravity is alone the cause of all her bitter enmity; and female worth the partial reason of my knowledge.—But stay, we are wasting time, that appears to me far too precious to be spent in idle conference. A thought strikes me:—to-morrow I will declare my story: but for this night recruit your spirits with a little sleep, and when you have refreshed yourself

yourself I will communicate the plan I have already formed.

‘ Ah, Grodern, my mind is too anxious for sleep : weariness is far away ; but fear, wonder, and curiosity, are waking. My suspense is cruel!’

The infants had been long asleep, upon the straw and rushes with which the apartment was spread ; Grodern wished to follow their example, and, complaining of great fatigue, refused to satisfy the curiosity of Jacquemar ; who being constrained at last by the laws of hospitality, suffered the others to enjoy that repose which he denied himself, and waited until day-break

in

in a state of unspeakable distress and anxiety. At day-light Grodern arose from his sleep, and thus bespoke the eager eared Jacquemar :—

“ My friend, our lives and liberties appear to me in danger here : I know of a temporary safeguard : the abbess of a neighbouring convent is my benefactress and unshaken friend. I lived under the same roof with her father, and shared her infant play : time severed us, but time has never obliterated from her memory the days of childhood, or from her heart the sweet ties of innocent and youthful amity. Towards her then, ere it is morning, let us all bend our footsteps,
and

and seek the mansion of hospitality and benevolence : She will receive and protect us until we hear more, and can plan better ; but before I introduce you, first promise never to enquire of me or seek to discover my method of receiving intelligence : it would injure us greatly were it discovered : you have only to rest satisfied, and you will be well. Let us awake Dunisleda, and after some refreshment is taken, we will depart to the convent.

Fortunately for the refugees, there had fallen a heavy rain in the latter part of the night, which entirely thawed the snow, so as to prevent their

18 THE ANIMATED SKELETON.

route being discovered by the marks of their footsteps. The scheme of Grodern soon obtained the consent of the whole party; and after a hasty meal, made on some poor cheeses, milk, and barley-cakes, they prepared to set out on their walk. "We must pass in silence through the forest," said Grodern, "lest some early spy or wily deceiver should overhear our converse, and betray our departure; and I doubt not but the emissaries of Brunchilda will be early at our cottages."

' When we have passed the forest, wherefore cannot you tell me the history of her anger, which you last night

night promised me? and why will it not then be safe to listen to Dunifleda?' peevishly asked the impatient Jacquemar.

Dunifleda declared she could not support the walk and the cold of the weather, if obliged to give her narration during the one, or until relieved from the other; "besides," added Grodern, "by the warm cheering fire of the hospitable convent, we may converse in safety and in comfort:— we may sit unmoved by the surrounding storm, and look back unterrified on the past."

They accordingly departed in silence ; but the cold of the morning which was doubly felt when they had left the shelter of the forest, was almost too much for the enfeebled Dunifleda and her tender offspring. ‘ Bear up my love,’ cried Jacquemar, ‘ the convent must be near at hand.’ “ Alas,” replied the shivering partner of his way, “ I have ventured too much : my strength is too far exhausted to suffer me to survive the shock of last night’s terrors or this morning’s walk !”

Poor Dunifleda had reason to complain of the severity of the weather : she felt the pangs of child-birth approaching :

THE ANIMATED SKELETON. 21

proaching: the fears of the preceding evening had brought them on. In pain and sorrow she dragged her suffering frame towards the convent; at six in the morning, at dim distance, they beheld its towers; scarcely would they have been perceptible had not a high hill, on whose bleak sides the snow lay yet unmelted, been at a distance behind the convent, by which the contrast of the black towers were shewn. — ‘Now then we are safe,’ exclaimed Grodern, ‘from the tyranny of Brunchilda; cheer up, cheer up, Dunifleda; see the abbey-lights!’ —

22 THE ANIMATED SKELETON.

“Curfed villain !” roared a voice from behind him, “you are fafe ; fafe in my power, fafe in my detection !” At that instant he received a wound from a dagger, and starting round, by the light of a dark lantern which the villain held in his hand, he perceived Conrad, a favourite with Brunchilda. Jacquemar instantly, on hearing a shriek of surprise from Grodern, and beholding the miscreant, flew on him with the rage of a tiger, and, wresting the dagger from his grasp, plunged it deep in the bosom of the assassin. He fell ; and, uttering blasphemous execrations, died. Dunifleda gave a loud scream, and fainted in the arms of Edgar. She had

had seen Grodern bleed ; and instant fear made her apprehend a numerous party was at hand.—She could not sustain it, but became insensible.

“ This, this is ruin,” cried Grodern, unmindful of his bleeding shoulder, which happily, however, was but slightly hurt ; “ we must remove the body, or we shall by that be traced. You, Edgar and Jacquemar, must assist me to convey it to the convent.”

‘ Alas! my Duniſſeda, my Duniſſeda, I muſt attend to her,’ replied the anxious Jacquemar. — Grodern now, with redoubled vexation, beheld the insensible ſtate of the unfortunate

female. "Alas!" said he, "we must convey her to the convent as we can; my son must remain and bury the body. Speed forward Edgar, and borrow such instruments as are necessary to secure Conrad's corpse in the earth, safe from observation: we must not attempt to drag it on, lest the blood should betray us.

Edgar hastened forward; and meanwhile the forrowing party slowly conveyed Dunifleda within the gates; a good fire and attention soon restored her to her senses—but immediately the pangs of parturition seized her with redoubled force, and she was shortly after delivered of a dead child.

The

The tenderest care was shewn her by the abbess, the nuns, and the wife of Grodern; yet there appeared but little hopes of her recovery to any of them.

After some time Edgar returned from the interment of Conrad's body—nothing had occurred to prevent him, and he believed he was perfectly secure from discovery. The snow beginning again to fall, covered the place where he had deposited the villain, and at the same time hid the blood which had flowed from his wound.

Sorrow now for the sufferings of his wife entirely repressed the curiosity of

Jacquemar;

Jacquemar; his Dunifleda was for many days unable to speak; but at last, knowing her husband's anxiety, she strove to address him: her attendants attempted to prevent her, and on account of her debilitated state, enjoined her a strict silence; but as soon as better enabled, she declared to them it was of little use;—for although she might be more exhausted by speaking just then, yet it was of no moment, as she felt she could never recover.—Death had marked her for his own, and would not be disappointed. A temporary renovation she might feel, but the cold and terror had too deeply affected her, ever to suffer her to be radically cured, or indeed to let her

her live any length of time. Having regained, by the assistance of their cordials, a small degree of strength, she told Jacquemar she would relate to him her adventure of the preceding evening, as it might be of great consequence to hear it recited by herself. As soon therefore as he would permit her, she thus told what he anxiously listened to.

The Escape of Dunifleda.

“ You know, my Jacquemar, I
 “ left my cottage early in the morn-
 “ ing, to sell the few cheeses I had
 “ made. I departed for the nearest
 “ village to the dwelling of Duke.

“ Albert ;

28 THE ANIMATED SKELETON.

“ Albert; hoping that in the neigh-
“ bourhood of the castle I should
“ have more chance of vending my
“ little store, and thereby sustain my
“ starving infants. Perhaps, said I to
“ myself, I may in the walks near
“ that building meet my dear bene-
“ factress, the Lady Hildegarda; she
“ will hear, and pity our misfortunes.
“ As I was proceeding, a young
“ man overtook and asked me whi-
“ ther I was walking; and on hear-
“ ing, said he was going the same
“ way. He would walk on with me
“ and talk. I did not wish for his
“ company, and tried to be silent;
“ but he asked me so many questions,
“ I could not. At last he asked me
“ if

“ if I had seen the Duke often? I
 “ told him I had never seen him :
 “ then, said he, you would not know
 “ if a person spoke to you, whether
 “ it was the Duke or not? I still
 “ replied no! Well, said he, you
 “ must beware of him; he is a very
 “ wicked man: every woman that
 “ is beautiful becomes his prey;—
 “ he sets men to discover if any poor
 “ man has a beautiful wife or daugh-
 “ ter.—Ah, said I, I have heard he
 “ is bad, but I am safe; for though
 “ my husband calls me beautiful, I
 “ know that is only because his love
 “ makes him like my face better
 “ than others; besides, it is not such
 “ beauty as mine pleases great peo-
 “ ple,

“ple, they like fair ladies who are
 “shut up in castles, and look white :
 “poverty is also my defence ;
 “scarcely can I purchase such ar-
 “ticles of wear as are necessary,
 “much less such as would make
 “me shine forth to catch a Prince’s
 “eye.—You are wrong, replied he ;
 “the Duke knows better than to
 “court the sickly slender females you
 “describe. — Knows better, Sir ! I
 “mean (quick he returned) despises
 “them ; he seeks those lasses whose
 “faces seem to have stolen the bloom
 “of spring, and whose mouths breathe
 “all its fragrance — such as thee,
 “sweet fair.—I fear, Sir, by your talk,
 “you are worse than the Duke, and
 “am

“ am ashamed to be seen with you.—
 “ You do me great wrong ; I can see
 “ and protect, but can never injure
 “ beauty ; — but I see the poverty of
 “ your clothes will serve in the Duke’s
 “ eye as a foil to your charms, which
 “ must shine the brighter from the
 “ contrast. But some people tell me
 “ different of Duke Albert : they say
 “ he is the father of the fatherless,
 “ and protector of the poor.—Oh
 “ very true, he is so more especially
 “ if they are females : he generally
 “ protects them in a part of his castle
 “ set apart for the purpose, and said
 “ to be haunted ; but I believe it is
 “ chiefly with she-spirits. — I did not
 “ know whether I should believe
 “ him

" him or not; but he begged if I
 " meant to come home late in the
 " evening, to let him see me safe
 " home, or go round another way.
 " I told him I did not desire his
 " company, and bade him leave me.
 " This he soon after did, saying the
 " time might come when I should
 " wish for his assistance. I went on
 " to the village, and was very lucky :
 " so I set off again, thinking of my
 " little ones all the while; but I
 " came back the same way, because
 " it was the safest at night. I beheld
 " nobody until I came near the side
 " of the forest; there I saw two men
 " standing behind a large tree. I was
 " frightened, and scarcely dared to
 " walk

“ walk on. When I came more near,
 “ they rushed forwards, and, seizing
 “ me roughly by the arm, attempted
 “ to drag me to the forest.—I resisted
 “ whilst I was able, but in vain; and
 “ they were bearing me forcibly away.
 “ One of them cursed me for scream-
 “ ing, and said the Count will pay
 “ us handsomely for this lovely crea-
 “ ture.—What do you mean by call-
 “ ing Albert the Count? said the
 “ other.—Well, well, the Duke.—My
 “ continued screams brought a man
 “ to my assistance, who came running
 “ to me with his sword drawn. My
 “ weakness, from fatigue, and the
 “ pain I suffered from the bruises I
 “ received by their roughness, joined

"with my fear, made me faint.
 "When I recovered, I found myself
 "supported by my deliverer, in whom
 "I discovered the young man who
 "had given me his advice in the
 "morning. He now reproached
 "me with my former ill opinion of
 "him, and said he hoped I should
 "in future pay more attention to his
 "cautions. I felt very much ashamed
 "of myself, and begged his pardon :
 "he said he could not now attend
 "me home, because he would go
 "in pursuit of the men who had
 "fled, just before I recovered ; but
 "bade me to run home directly ; and
 "desired I would not disbelieve him
 "any more. I readily promised to
 "obey

obey him. It now was become
 nearly dark, from the lateness of
 the evening, and a heavy storm
 drawing over the forest, made it
 become quite so. The snow and
 rain which began to fall chilled me,
 and I lost my way several times be-
 fore I reached our door: and this,
 my dear Jacquemar, is the cause of
 all you have seen; but I must not
 forget to tell you, the young man
 bid me remember Alwin."

Here Dunfleda concluded; and
 exhausted with the effort, requested
 they would leave her, as she felt
 weary, and wished for repose. They
 there-

therefore quitted the cell where she then lay.

"Good Heavens!" said Jacquemar, when they were seated, "what must my poor love have suffered! But noble, noble Alwin, how shall I ever repay his care! how ever express my gratitude!"

"You know not the value of gratitude," said Grodern, "if you cast it away on so execrable a villain!"

"Unjust old man, my gratitude is due to my wife's preserver!"

Dim-

'Dim-lighted youth! your wife's
 sure murderer! you make gratitude
 become a vice, to bestow it on those
 base men who, to gain their own
 ends, pretend to serve you!'

"Oh, Grodarn, he was generous,
 brave, and noble."

' Jacquemar, he is a villain! but
 alas, how is youth deceived by the
 outward appearance! the honesty of
 the good render them more ob-
 noxious to the knavery of the wicked.
 You, poor Jacquemar, are the dupe
 of art.'

"Wherefore called you him my wife's murderer?"

"He is no less.—Observed you what your Dunifieda said of the two men? the mistake of the Count for the Duke."

"I did."

"Knowest thou not Count Hubert?"

"Ha! Grodern! how dare you call him by that name! it has long been declared a matter of death to name him so. Count Richard is now his title."

"How

“How long, Jacquemar, has this order been?”

“Ever since the wicked Count Richard fled from the old court, and I was a little boy then; but several have been taken since, and sent we know not whither, for calling him Hubert.”

Groden at this showed strong marks of anger and surprise on his countenance, and became gloomy and lost in thought.

In about an hour's time Dunifleda sent for Jacquemar: she had awaked low and very ill.

Jacquemar in vain essayed to cheer her spirits. He chatted, he sung softly to her; once the sound of his voice would raise her; once the wild notes of a rustic instrument he played on, would inspire her with life. The charm was lost, she became more low, and talked of dying. Jacquemar still sung to please his Dunifieda; but his notes favoured of strong melancholy. He was ill in spirits at her sufferings, his words soon caught the infection, and he could only sing according to the impulse of the occasion:

Cheerily

Cheerily, cheerily,
 Smile, smile, dear love, smile cheerily.
 No more is heard the northern blast;
 The storm is spent, the tempest past:
 Smile like yon sun, smile cheerily.

In a faint voice, to his dear
 painful surprise, she replied,

Cheerily, cheerily
 I never must smile cheerily:
 For though the wintry storm is past,
 Too rude too rough has been the blast;
 And life it drags on wearily, wearily!

Yet would thy Dunstons stay,
 Cheer thee one hour, and then away,
 would fate permit:

But no! My love, forget thy grief;

Let thy fond infants bring relief,

as most is fit:

'Tis thou that must smile cheerily.

Her

Her voice failed her, and she sunk back on the couch. He thought she had only closed her eyes from weakness, he knew not she had fainted; but pained by her reply, he with streaming eyes, whilst he eagerly pressed her chilly hands, continued,

Drearily, drearily;

Life will but pass too drearily!

Arise, my Dunifieda, smile,

One look, sad sorrow to beguile.

Oh speak, smile, breathe—Oh God! speak — Dunified! — Oh Dunified, Dunified! — Gracious Heavens! — my love, my love!—Speak to me, Dunified —

Dunifieda spoke not: he raised her, he kissed her. Her lips grew cold, she

she chilled upon his bosom !—a small noise in her throat ; she opened her mouth !—Half agonized with hope and fear, he again cried, My love, speak. She spoke not : he gently shook her. Speak, Dunitied.—Short breathing, he gazed in frigid horror ; but she had not opened her mouth to speak. Life, no longer willing to animate her body, departed rudely, and in the shock caused her jaw-bone to descend. The starting of her eyes taught her Jacquemar his fate !

Let me close the door of the cell on the sorrows of the mourner ; the contemplation of his sufferings cannot be agree-

agreeable to the reader. Let us leave him to the meliorating hand of Time, though we must sigh for him, whilst we say with the sweet sonneteer,

But ah! what pain must that poor heart endure,
That hopes from thee, and thee alone, a cure!

BOWLES.

On the evening of the day on which the remains of Dunifleda were interred, Grodern, who had been absent much of the time since their arrival at the convent, returned, and informed Jacquemar it was not proper longer to indulge in his sorrows: it was his duty as well as his interest to rouse his firmness, and prepare for the occurrences of the ensuing day.

“ To-

"To-morrow," said he, "the convent will be searched. Brunchilda is certain we are here: she will, in the Duke's name, demand us. If we are not given up, she will by force attempt to find us." "Perhaps, Grodern, you can inform us what has passed since we left the forest." "I can. On the morning of our flight a complaint was laid before the Duke that you and myself, assisted by my son, had attacked two of Brunchilda's attendants, and had attempted to murder them, but they were rescued by Edward. It was said we immediately fled homewards. Messengers were dispatched therefore to our cottages to arrest us; but we were not

to be found; their enquiries were equally unsuccessful; no one had seen us since the overnight, when we had spoken to many; who declared, on their being questioned, that we showed no signs of a predetermined flight. Conrad had been out early in the morning, and never returned again; the accusers therefore hesitated not to say, we had murdered and concealed him. Brunchilda mourned his loss greatly; for, excepting Edward, that wicked woman had not a greater favourite amongst her domestics."

"Is it a crime then to have a favourite?"

"A vir-

“A virtuous friendship, Jacquemar, stimulates its possessors to be good and great; but virtue is unknown to the lady of Duke Albert, who lavishes on every base usurper the affections due only to her lord. Let the thick bowers of the garden of Albert declare the wickedness of Brunchilda, and the insolence of Conrad. — Greatly was the lady enraged at our departure; she in vain tried to account for it; she could not discover our reasons. Sometimes she said to her privy council, that she feared we had received some intelligence from them of her designs, and thus were enabled to counteract her plans. Jealousy reigned amongst them for
 several

several days,—and she shunned their advice; but at length, striving to forget it, wishing again for their favour, and being determined to find us, she again consulted them. Passing over the way we came by, one of her household saw a dead body lying on the ground: it appeared to have been torn up from a hole which was fresh and near it. It was wounded in the bosom, and appeared to have been murdered: it had no covering whatever; and already the birds of prey were hovering over it. The body appeared to have been many days deprived of life; but the extreme coldness of the weather had prevented it from becoming putrid.

“ The

“The man examined it, and was going away, when the countenance arrested his attention. After a minute’s survey, he found it to be Conrad’s. — I cannot account otherwise for its being above ground, than that some person whose notice was attracted by seeing the newly-dug earth, after the melting of the snow, had the curiosity to examine the place; and finding a body well clothed, stripped it of its covering. — Big with his discovery, the man went home and immediately imparted the news to Brunchilda. For some time she was at a loss to account for his death, until she recollected the road by which he was found led to the con-

vent. She then called to mind the great kindness of the abbess to all the poor cottagers around;—and she fancied we had flown hither for protection. To-morrow therefore we are to be fought for. She has now charged us with the murder and robbery.—Conrad's body is shown the Duke as a proof thereof; and he believes our calumniators.—Disguise must be our refuge, for innocence will not alone do. Our flight looks suspicious; besides, there was no impartial witness to declare that we only acted from self-defence. The wound in my shoulder will be ridiculed; we must therefore go through in the manner we set out:—my wife shall wear the habit

habit of an ancient nun, and we will appear as monks from a neighbouring monastery. To the abbess we must trust for the concealment of the children."

' Good Grodern, how can they dare to search a convent ! What right have they for so sacriligious an act ?'

" Ask not by what right they do it :—power, with them, is sufficient right : but besides, the overgrown power of our nobles cannot be retrenched ; long has it been the burden of the people : vainly have they appealed to their monarch ; he is but a noble with a more sounding title.

If the monarch offers to restrain the m,
or question their behaviour, he re-
ceives in return some rebellious an-
swer or insolent demeanor; and Hugh
Capet is but a King of Wood, set up
for men to gaze at, not obey!"

‘ Cannot the convent apply to the
pope, or threaten them with his ven-
geance?’

“ No, Jacquemar, for they despise
the latter, whilst they would prevent
the first. Should we be discovered,
we shall be tried, condemned, and
executed by the adherents of Brun-
childa.”—

After

After this Grodern was silent for some time. Jacquemar having paused a while on the danger of the morrow, suffered his thoughts to revert to the melancholy subject they had been drawn from. Used to hard and continual labour in all weathers,—uneducated, and unable to read, how could the mind of a peasant be amused for a number of days, when deprived of his usual employment ! Jacquemar until now had scarcely had a grief. If misfortune did gently oppress him, his constant work, or the soothing of his Dunifleda, made him forget his care. Here he had nothing to do ; living in ease and plenty, without the necessity of labour to procure a sub-

sistence, might please the dreamer of a little space; but in idleness our peasant could only nourish grief: and he fell into a long and painful depth of thought and retrospection. Grodern with pity beheld his suffering; and he attempted to amuse him.

“Jacquemar,” said he, “I will tell you something which happened last night at the castle; it may serve to convince you the northern wing is not inhabited by the Duke’s spirits. There arrived lately a knight from the court of England, called Sir Raymond Fitz-Henry: he is now at the castle. The party at the same place was last night augmented by
the

the arrival of a stranger knight, in black armour. Every thing he had about him was black, except what I proceed to describe :—He carried a shield covered with cloth of the same dismal hue. On being asked what were his bearings, he removed the black cloth, and showed that his shield was covered with another painted one. ‘Beneath this,’ said he, ‘they are ; but never until a certain deed is done shall it be removed ; then shall my cognizance be seen, and then shall my name be known. Until then, call me Grimoaldus the Avenger.

The painting on the second covering of his shield consisted of a dark

ground : on it was depicted a female who had just wounded and killed an old stork, which lay dead at her feet. From its bosom was issuing a young serpent, which was beginning to wind its body round the feet of the woman : it had given her a deadly wound ; and she appeared to be agitated by great pain and rage. She seemed in vain to strive to withdraw herself from, or shake off the venomous animal.

The knight was attended by no squire or page : he is a noble and majestic figure ; Brunchilda views him with a look of curiosity and admiration, Sometimes a kind of suspicion
 shades

shades her features, when turned towards the stranger knight.

When admitted at the gates, he said he was come in search of adventures: seeing the castle on his way, he advanced for refreshment. During the last meal of the evening, some of the company made mention of the haunted apartments. The Duke laughed at the idea, and declared he had long ridiculed the whole story.— He whom you call Count Richard affirmed the same; and with a voice of stifled emotion, said it was merely raised by idle and impertinent people, who knew not wherefore that wing was uninhabited: but that the fools

gave

gave way to every impulse of fear and superstition; and to the anger of Branchilda.

This occasioned much debate on the subject of ghosts; and the haunted wing was several times mentioned; when at last Branchilda, with a countenance of rage and often fear (alternately from pale to red, and from red to pale) requested so ridiculous a conversation might have an end. Again the Count, her brother, joined her in essaying to change the subject; and he seemed considerably more angry at it than his sister. It was remarked by the English knight, Sir Raymond Fitz-Henry, but remarked in silence; neither was the confusion

of

of Hubert (for I call him by no other name) or the anger of Brunchilda lost on the stranger. Some person present, who seemed more actuated by the spirit of tormenting than curiosity, and who had made the same observations which the two knights had done, determined to prevent the closing of that discourse. — “Surely,” said he, “murders have been there committed!”

“And who has authorized you,” imperiously, demanded Brunchilda, “to fancy the castle of my ancestors has been stained with blood?”

Raymond Fitz-Henry, but remarked, “I have seen the evidence; neither was the conclusion

‘I do not fancy it, Madam,’ said the person, with a smile half apologetic, half sarcastic; ‘but the troubled spirits of the departed do not walk there for nothing!’

“Ridiculous idea!” cried Brunchilda; “weak supposition!”

‘May I enquire,’ said the teizer, turning to the Duke, ‘why those apartments were shut up, and rendered totally useless by all persons being excluded from them?’

Brunchilda, whose eyes now sparkled with rage, waited not for Albert’s answer, but replied, “We want them

not;

not; we have sufficient room without entering those damp and dreary places."

The curiosity of Grimoald seemed now awakened; and as he said at his first entrance, he was come in search of adventures, he thought there was no impropriety in asking permission to sleep in those apartments in preference to any others.—He added, 'My returning safe in the morning from them, will convince both your attendants and your vassals that the ghosts only walk in the regions of their imagination. Those ideas then, which your lady (perhaps justly) calls so ridiculous, will be for ever banished; and

and the poor rats and owls (for such I in general believe ghosts to be) suffered to possess their habitation in tranquillity and peace.'

"Sir knight," replied Brunchilda, "you have already rooms allotted you in the habitable part of the building; and as they are such as we ever give to those we treat with respect and hospitality, should they not be what are satisfactory to you, either, this night or to-morrow you may take your departure:—seek through the other courts of France, and discover if they are better. Perhaps you will, after your search, have reason to avow
their

their grandeur consists of ineffectual trials to affect that magnificence which we really and easily support."

She hoped, by giving it this turn, she should effect her purpose of quieting the querists: however, feeling herself much agitated, and fearing to be discovered, she arose from the table and retired, as quickly did her brother. Their departure occasioned the breaking up of the company; and each retired to rest, except Albert, Sir Raymond, and Grimoald the Avenger.

"I fear (said Grimoald, when they
were

were gone) my questions concerning the cattle have offended the lady.'

"They seem so to have done," replied the Duke;" yet I really know not why they should.—Still I observe, whenever the subject is mentioned she always prevents its being carried on; which I suppose arises from her dislike to such folly.—Indeed she always declares that to be the reason."

'Surely,' said Grimoald, 'my having remained in them this night, would have prevented her being troubled with such tales in future.'

"I think

"I think so myself," said the Duke; "but my lady always strenuously opposes every thing of the kind, though it has often been proposed. I would have permitted it myself, but ladies, you know, seldom admire opposition, unless it is their own parts."

"How long have they been disused?" asked Raymond. — "I know not exactly," said Albert; "but they were so long before I became master of this castle; which I did on my marriage with Brunchilda, to whose father it belonged. We have more room than we ever want already; and I never thought it material either to

open them, or enquire wherefore they were shut up."

Perhaps then you are uninformed of the reports which have been long and widely spread, injurious to your own and your lady's honour?

I have often heard that the peasantry thought them haunted, and of the plebeian opinions of former bloody deeds; but have ever treated them as idle rumours deserve; besides, little blame can surely attach to me when those places were uninhabited before the death of the prince who last possessed it. — Grimoald replied, ' Although hitherto a stranger to you and
your

your lady, I am not so to the popular legends of your castle, some of which have reached to distant provinces. One of the storms of this evening obliged me to seek shelter for myself and palfrey in one of the cottages belonging to the peasantry surrounding the castle: I had seen the towers rising above the trees, and having remarked the peculiar beauty of its appearance, I asked to whom it belonged. They informed me that Duke Albert was the owner. On hearing your name, I recollected to have heard of Duke Albert's haunted habitation; but this I did not notice to them, being curious to know what any of them would say, unassisted by my

recital of foreign stories on the subject. Further:—I wished to know whether what I had heard concerning the popular opinions of these domains was true.’

The Duke here interrupted Grimoald. “What then, you really do believe in apparitions?”

‘No; certainly not: that could not be deduced from what I have said. Indeed I believe you have heard me give it as an opinion, that they were in general owls or rats. At the same time I declare to you, I never yet found the story of a ghost gain so much belief, and so long influence
the

the minds of the people, attended with the circumstances this is, that had not some knavery for its support. I therefore never hear of any thing of the kind without a determination not to relinquish my search till I have made an entire discovery of the whole affair. Under the influence of this opinion, I asked them if there was any thing particular in the neighbourhood to see? Were there any ghosts which gave them trouble? or, Were there any injuries which wanted discovery and redressing?—At this, one of the peasants stared for some time at me, and then sat down and laughed a long while. I was much amused to observe his mirth; but very unable

to account for it. When he had expended his breath and merriment sufficiently to give me a chance of an answer, I asked him the reason of his risibility.—Oh Lord, Sir, to think what a mortal great man you take yourself for!—Is there any thing curious to see? any ghosts to drive out? or any injury to redress?—Mercy on us!—Why now, pray Sir, supposing I was to tell you the Duke had a she-devil locked in a box in the northern wing, and would let nobody see it on pain of death, would you go and try?—No, my friend, I replied; I should not think her worth going after, especially on pain of death.—Why, said the man, I know many a fool of a
lover I
knight

knight that would do so, merely because it was hard to be done, though it had no other merit than its difficulty. But what if I were to say there were as many ghosts as windows in the northern wing?—Why, my friend, as I never yet was hurt by a ghost, though I have attacked a large number, I should not care if there were as many ghosts as leaves upon the trees which surround the castle.—‘No doubt on’t, Sir, for I fancy you would find it hard to see any leaves on the trees, since these cold winds and sharp frosts have carried them all away. But, Sir, the people here all declare they have seen the goblins at every window and tower of the castle. Now

I have been round a hundred times, dark and dusk, light and bright, and never saw a ghost yet. As for injuries, you must be a god to redress them, for of late there is not a peasant but what has suffered by the horrible and uncommon oppression of the Duke and his Brunchilda.—Devil take 'em, say I.'

"I am infinitely obliged," said Albert, "both for his account of my oppression, and his reward at the end of it. I cannot guess wherefore he thus blackens my character.—I thought my vassals were happy and contented; it has ever been my study to render them

them so : — but continue, I request you."

As soon as this man had done speaking, a young woman addressed him : — I am sure it is very strange you could never see any ghosts when so many other people see them every night, and all the Duke's servants believe them ! — And of whom do you believe them to be the ghosts ? — Oh dear, if I was to say, and the Lady Brunchilda was to hear it, we should be all killed, and our spirits sent to live with the others in the castle.

"Oh, fear not. Should the reports be false, she can never be angry at them,

them, as they must be too ridiculous to gain any credit.

“ Ah, Sir, there is but one good person in the castle, and that is the Lady Hildegard; she never can be the daughter of two such sad tyrants, because she is so good to us:—and her mother hates her so!—But, Sir, they say that when the Lady Gunilda (who was mother to our present lady) was alive, that all of a sudden a Count Richard and his wife and servants were all missing; and before that, a little son of her husband's first wife was gone too: so the Lady Gunilda and her son said he had been a very bad man.

“ Who

“Who had been a very bad man?”

“Why, Sir, the Count Richard: and that when he thought his bad ways were found out, he run away one night (but nobody believes it) because, soon after he went, the lady ordered all that side of the castle to be shut up, because such strange voices and noises were heard there. And then her son, who used to be called the Count Hubert, had all his estates and money, and took the title of Count Richard; and gave orders if any one dared to mention the bad Count, or call him (that is Hubert, Sir) or, I say, call him Hubert, and not

not call him Richard, they should die for it!—

Could not the people have complained to the king?—Oh they would have got no good by that; for none of our great lords in France mind the king now:—and they have a vast deal more power over us poor vassals than the king has: they be sad tyrants. Why, Sir, they said the Lady Brunchilda's mother had made away with them!

Thus did the damsel chatter and comment, until the storm being over, I remounted my horse, and advanced towards the castle:—and I wish I had

your

your permission, unknown to your Lady, to search these mysterious apartments.

The Duke, who had sat silent and gloomy during the remainder of the discourse, now broke silence. — My friend, said he, the night is too far advanced to admit of our searching those apartments now, because we shall be obliged to spend so much time in opening the great doors which lead to them; but so great an effect has the relation made on me, of the people's opinions, and so much have I been surprised at the confusion and anger of my lady, that if you will grant me your company and assistance

to-morrow night, I will put an end to this unpleasant affair. I wish not to have my intentions known to Brunchilda : I will therefore feign indisposition, that we may all retire early ; but when the castle is quiet, and there is no fear of interruption, I will call you from your chambers, and we will proceed to the rooms.

They easily consented to the proposal of the Duke ; and soon after this they retired for repose.

And how could you gain this intelligence ? asked Jacquemar. — Inquisitive animal, did I not forbid thee

thee to enquire? replied the old man.

Early that evening Grodern expressed a sense of great fatigue, pleaded his age, and said he was indisposed: he requested their leave to retire, and begged he might not be disturbed. On this he departed to the cell which was appointed for him, leaving Jacquemar much amazed at his intelligence, and the means by which he could obtain it. Having heard Grodern complain much of a severe indisposition, Jacquemar arose in the middle of the night, and, going to his cell, softly opened the door: but softly as it was done, it awaked Grodern,

dern, who angrily demanded what he wanted. — Jacquemar replied, fearing he might be worse in the night, he had only come to see if his friend wanted any thing, and if he reposed well. — Seeming only half satisfied, Grodern bid him return, and never again attempt to disturb him.

Next morning they were all summoned by the abbess to matins, and afterwards they met to take some refreshment. Grodern said he was much benefitted by the rest he had taken, and declared himself well. I had been up some time, said he, when we were called to matins.

Then

Then perhaps, said Jacquemar, smiling, you can tell more of the haunted rooms?

You must fancy my messengers are then very swift, to come all the way from the castle sufficiently early to deliver me any account of them. I can tell you, however, that your favourite Alwin will be here; therefore when Edward comes, remember Alwin. But we must not now stay for parley; let us procure our disguises.

Soon were Jacquemar and Edgar equipped like monks; and Grodern left them, as he said, to disguise him-

self. No person arrived at the convent all day; and they began to doubt the veracity of their old intelligencer. The convent was near the castle; but being divided from it by a river (which kept winding on very far before it was overarched by a bridge) the foot or horse-road was many miles round.

Jacquemar, having for that day lost his consolatory friend, fell again into his almost unmanly sorrows: and now the good abbess exerted her warmest efforts to soothe and cheer him. In her whole conduct was conspicuous that true benevolence and charity which are ever remarkable

markable in the lives of those who practise what they preach, and whose doctrine is the effort of belief, not of assent, or compliance with established form or popular opinion, merely because it is such. This convent was more remarkable for the spirit of Christianity than the *furor* of devotion: it was rather the asylum of the unfortunate than the retreat of enthusiasts: it was of an order similar to the Grey Sisters, whose whole time is spent in offices of charity.

They had retained their disguises all the remainder of the day, and were at night sitting round a cheerful fire, talking of the small necessity

84 THE ANIMATED SKELETON.

there appeared to be of keeping them any longer; when they were suddenly alarmed by a loud and impatient knocking at the exterior gates of the convent. Ere the abbess would allow the gates to be opened, she concealed the children in a closet, whose door was perfectly imperceptible to all who were unacquainted with it. She then suffered the gates to be unlocked. A party from the castle immediately rushed in, and demanded further entrance. This was denied them until they showed an order from Duke Albert to have the refugees given up, or, on refusal, a command to search the convent for them. The abbess in vain expostulated

postulated with them: she urged to them the indelicacy of their proceedings, and the impropriety of their suffering a rude band to range the convent and interrupt her nuns.— But the wind would have been as passive had she forbid its blasts to howl around her. By dint of much entreaty she gained permission to conduct her flock into one large room, which had been first searched, and lock them in to secure them from wanton insult. This having been done, the convent was entirely passed over by Brunchilda's emissaries: but no person after whom they had made enquiry was discovered, until, seeing

the two monks, Edward demanded from whence they came.

Cannot you discover that their habit is of the neighbouring monastery? did the abbess reply.

And what are their names?

The abbess hesitated. They had forgotten to name them.

Speak, madam, this instant, said Edward, with the countenance of suspicion and the voice of anger.

“Father Everard, and Father Anselm.”

‘Rather

‘Rather, madam, say villain, Jacquemar and rascal Edgar. But pray, where is Father Grodern?’

The abbess was terrified, but replied he was not within her convent-walls.

‘And pray, madam, how came these holy men within your convent-walls? were they admitted to protect your nuns? Doubtless, the young Edgar is a proper guard. Perhaps they mean to take the veil?’

The abbess, whose conduct and whose management of her vestals was such as was unspotted, only answered.

with a smile of dignity and contempt.

Madam, I shall find a way to make you answer and repent your scorn. I demand who are they?—Alas! said the abbess, trembling for the fate of her guests, alas! as poor unfortunate travellers, they came to seek my protection, and besought me to grant them in my convent an asylum for a few days, from the persecution of their enemies, and during the inclemency of the weather. One brought his wife in very ill, and has since had the misfortune to lose her; and I could not be so cruel as to turn them out again without first trying to restore

restore the unfortunate and mournful husband to peace and cheerfulness.

On your life, madam, declare where the traitor Grodern is concealed ! — This uttered, Edward, at the same time, drew a dagger and presented it to her heart !

Stay Sir, said she, again resuming her dignity, and a look which awed the insolent : — Stay Sir, — the sacred character I bear must prevent your assassination of me : — and by all the terrors of the holy church which shall be denounced on you and your employers, I charge you hold. You have already violated the honour of
this

this sacred place : you have dared to search the convent : you have not found the chief object of your search : the others claim my protection :—I give it, and I demand your immediate absence.

Edward drew back, conscious he had not received orders to proceed thus far ; and dreading the wrath of the holy father to whom the abbess might appeal, and whose mandate Albert would obey, notwithstanding all that Grodern had affirmed to Jacquemar, still he continued to demand the surrender of the two men.—The abbess still refused to give consent :

sent : and Edward dared not to seize them, because they were under the protection of the church. Their defendress declared they should remain unmolested with her until some deeds of guilt were proved against them.—I will not, said she, betray the confidence they have placed in me ; neither dare you to violate the trust. I charge you then, under pain of the severest anathemas from Italy, to leave them undisturbed.

Intimidated by her firmness, Edward withdrew, muttering curses, and vowing revenge.

The band being departed, the nuns were conducted back to their cells, and the party again surrounded the fire. Grodern was still away: neither did they see any thing more of him that night: much did his absence surprize them; and many conjectures did they form: but as neither surprize or conjecture could bring them back, they retired to rest without him.

The next morning he joined them at breakfast. The curious Jacquemar so overwhelmed him with enquiries, and was so importunate for an answer, that he scarcely permitted him to make a repast. Having at
last

last finished, Grodern told him he had been in safety, and was able to give nearly all the information he wished. I shall continue, said he, from where I yesterday concluded, concerning the haunted apartments; for, should I at first answer your other queries, you will not become sufficiently calm and silent to listen to the reply I should make to the last.

After supper the Duke, as was agreed on, complained of fatigue, and said he was not sufficiently well to sit up longer. Brunchilda seemed pleased at this declaration; but he knew not wherefore: she soon departed,

parted, as did the rest of the company. The two knights imagined the weariness of the Duke proceeded merely from design, and was as feigned as he had said it should be: each of them therefore retired to his chamber, where they anxiously waited, every minute expecting the promised summons, but in vain: Duke Albert never came. Fatigued at length, and sick of waiting, they composed themselves to rest, each suspecting the Duke had some reason for the breaking of his word; and this suspicion made Grimoald more determined than ever to search to the bottom of a mystery which began, in

his recollecting the excessive sleep.

bel

his opinion, to have a very bad appearance.

Little blame could attach to the Duke in this affair. Finding himself in reality as much fatigued as he said, and uncommonly heavy, he threw himself on his couch, merely to rest until the inhabitants of the castle were hushed; but a deep sleep overtook him, and when he awaked, found it was late in the morning, and that he was drest and in his own chamber as over-night. In a few minutes the natural surprise which attended his first waking (and ere his ideas and memory became unconfused) left him on his recollecting the excessive sleepyness

ness he had felt the night before ; and which lately had not become uncommon to him. The neglect he had been guilty of, and the disappointment he had in consequence occasioned the knights, made him appear greatly confused when he first beheld Grimoald and Sir Raymond Fitz-Henry ; conscious they would think the affront great, and have reason to suspect that he deserved the popular opinion. He was justified in this idea by the gravity with which they received his compliments of the morning : and both hastily addressing him, informed him they intended taking their leave of the castle that same day. This they had both previously agreed

on :

on: they had also determined to remain in the neighbourhood until they could contrive some method of discovering the truth, and to declare their unravelling the mystery.

After much intreaty and many avowals of sincerity; after having produced witnesses from amongst his own servants of the frequency of this unaccountable drowsiness, he with much trouble prevailed on them to stay yet another night beneath his roof: in which they should explore the haunted chambers.

Gloomy and morose was the lady of Duke Albert all the preceding

day; for he had often changed his mind during the time. He disliked the measure of searching the convent, and thought it profane; but at length, by importunity she gained his final consent; and her ill-mannered attendants, as you are a witness of, put her designs in execution. When she found that you were discovered and not brought back by her emissaries, her rage was unbounded; and she vowed when alone with her beloved paramour Edward, she would be amply revenged on the abbess for the protection she had afforded you—Chiefly was she incensed that I was missing.

Jacquemar

Jacquemar could not here restrain his love of questioning ; but requested to know what had made Brunchilda so much the enemy of so apparently insignificant an old man.

In some part I can reply to your queries. Viewing the extreme beauty and gracefulness of Edgar, she wished him to become one of her chief domestics : often she sent to me for him. At first I treated her messengers with great coolness and contempt ; but at least she desired he might become a gardener to the castle. In this situation I imagined him more safe from her wiles than were he in any other. I therefore suffered him to go ; but

he speedily found this place subjected him more to her company than that of a servant in the castle would have done. Under pretences of walking and being fond of plants, she would go where Edgar was working: she would call him from his labour to attend to her whims. The folly she showed in her distribution, with her inattention to soil or season, proved it was neither fondness for or knowledge of agriculture which had made her attempt any alterations. Edgar at first would remonstrate with her on the want of skill she showed: this seemed to please her; and she would endeavour to draw on long conversations. In a short time he began to
remark,

remark, that she paid him an uncommon attention, and that her whole carriage towards him favoured more of love than of decorum. Edgar had even a bad opinion of the lady: he could witness the cruelty of her treatment of Hildegard: he could observe the strong contrast in the behaviour of these females; and as his admiration of the one increased, his disgust towards the other heightened.

Brunchilda gave him hints, which could not be but understood; but he feigned ignorance. This increased the passion of the lady; and she spoke at length in such terms, that he could no longer pretend to misunderstand her.

her. Knowing that, in females, disappointed passion often turns to the most inveterate hatred, he thought it best to quit her service before it became too late : he therefore left her, and returned home.

Soon after, as he was passing through the forest, he there beheld one of her domestics (indeed I may inform you it was the identical Edward to whom we are now so much obliged) quarrelling with a poor vassal of the Duke Albert ; and not contented with abusing the man, proceeded to beat him with the greatest brutality ; which the age and weakness of the other prevented him from

resisting.

resisting. Edgar flew to his assistance, and rescued him from the cruelty of Edward. This was repeated to Brunchilda, with every aggravation which falsehood could invent; since which she has often essayed to bring us to the castle; but in vain: we know her disappointed pride and the malice of her parasite would be our immediate ruin. Our present baffling of her plans has made her determine to spare no pains to accomplish our overthrow. Speaking of me last night, said she, "there lurks in the countenance of that old traitor some deep and hidden purpose; his eye never meets mine with the bashful timidity of the humble peasant, but with the half con-

cealed determination and angry ferocity of the injured equal; however, to-morrow shall give to my revenge himself and son. Neither shall his friend, his Jacquemar, escape; and we will sit in judgment within the abbey-walls; and do you, my faithful Edward, prepare the men this night to swear with caution.—“Where are those two men who seized on Dumnifleda?”

‘Ready at hand for orders, answered Edward.’

“At night, then, when the Duke is retired, bring them to me: and mind,—when at supper Albert calls
for

for the cup, infuse, as thou hast often done, this sleeping potion. This, my dear Edward, has often prevented him from disturbing our plans by his presence; and this shall again do so."

Edward then saluted the wife of his master, and retired to perform her orders. Brunchilda joined the party; and having informed the Duke of their discovery, obtained his permission to sit in judgment on the next day. Knowing how trivial in general were the causes of her complaint, he did not hesitate; his mercy made him hope the unfortunate men would be found innocent. At the same time, knowing how much her
malevolent

malevolent disposition would generally make her determined to misconstrue the matter, he resolved to attend the examination, accompanied by the two knights.

At supper, Edward infused the potion; but the Duke drank not thereof: he suspected something was wrong, and determined to be very wary: he well knew another sleeping accident would ruin him for ever in the opinion of his guests. To this must be attributed his absence of the former nights, and that heaviness he had so often complained of. His not drinking it was observed by Edward, by Brunchilda, and her brother: the latter

latter of whom held the Duke in detestation. Perhaps you have never beheld this man : I will therefore describe him to you, as, in my opinion, his person in some measure is strongly marked with his character : — His figure is tall, and size gigantic ; his complexion of the darkest hue : thick and sable eye-brows hung low over his fierce and hawk-like eyes ; he wears his beard short and bushy ; but it nearly covers the lower part of his face : the stile of his dress adds to the ferocity of his appearance ; and his manners (except constrained) are as ungentle as his mind is dark. Long has he despised the Duke for the sincerity of his disposition ; for
that

that he calls meanness. Often has Albert given his pardon to the simple offenders arraigned by his lady : and to a soul which harbours nothing but revenge, forgiveness is a crime. Long has he envied the Duke his possessions ; part of which Brunchilda has promised shall belong to him upon her husband's death. He had been informed by his sister that the sleeping draught was to be given him that night ; and he therefore, on finding the Duke abstain from drinking of the cup, thought they were suspected. In the morning a dispute had taken place between Hubert and the Duke ; in which the latter had not spoken much to the praise or satisfaction of the

the

the Earl, who retired from his presence angry and revengeful. The whole day had been passed in ruminating on the affront he had received. His pride inflamed him to so violent a degree, that he determined to murder Albert that night when the draught had hushed him in the arms of sleep; but when he found the first had not been taken, he determined to postpone the second. He was invited to accompany his sister to the trial on the ensuing day, but refused, having resolved to remain at the castle and plot the evening's assassination. When Albert again complained of being ill and weary, each of the traitors believed he really was so,
and

110 THE ANIMATED SKELETON.

and imputed it to the effects of the last night's potion; which, they imagined, were not yet entirely evaporated: He was therefore suffered to retire without further remark or demur, more especially as the early dissolving of the party suited the scheme of the lady.

When all seemed quiet, the Duke, now punctual to his promise, called upon the knights; and both in complete armour were ready to attend him. They immediately proceeded to the haunted wing, which was in part, at least such as was more modern, built exactly to answer its opposite one: the only difference con-

fisted

sisted in some heavy architecture, constructed by the Goths at the time they over-run that part of France in which were the territories of Duke Albert: all the other parts had been added to it by the ancestors of Brunchilda's father-in-law, the husband of Gunilda. With great difficulty they unclosed the folding doors, which from a court in the center of the castle, opened upon a passage which led into it. Scarcely would they turn upon their hinges, on account of the rust which had thickened around them. Still were the adventurers much surprised to find them but slightly fastened up; but they imputed it to the haste in which some fear had caused

Gunilda

Gunilda to desert that wing (for that there was some evil deed or cause for fear they now all began to fancy) and to the little curiosity servants in those days in general feel to encounter ghosts: beings they readily believed the existence of, and of whom they most strenuously wished to avoid the sight.

Damp, musty, and unwholesome vapours issued from every room; in most of which they found the furniture remaining as if people had but a minute before ceased to use them: some placed by the ashes of fires which seemed just decayed; some placed at tables on which the vessels
yet

yet remained; but all covered with the accumulated dust of distant times. In some rooms the ravages of time, added to the weakening of neglect, had brought the roofing to decay; the rains had entered, and the damp had clothed the walls with its verdant mantle; whilst all the moveables were covered with the grey spotting mildew; and any thing which arose from the labours of the loom, fell to pieces on removal. Here the worm worked its winding cloisters, and there the spider spread her mazy dwelling; devastation and decay had passed through each apartment. They continued to go through all the lower suite of rooms without meeting ghost or goblin, or

114 THE ANIMATED SKELETON.

any thing worth further notice, until coming to a large room, they beheld a table furrounded by seats, and spread with viands all dusty, and of ancient date. Some were decayed in the dishes, and others dried and mouldy: as to their nature and sort, time had made that impossible to guess; but it appeared as if people had arisen from a splendid feast, where the rites of Bacchus had not been neglected; or rather let me say, were meant to be celebrated; for the vessels remained wherein the liquor had dried up, or become unfit for use.

What a waste of furniture and provision is there here? exclaimed Sir

Raymond;

Raymond; and by what could all this have been occasioned!

Occasioned! reiterated Grimoald: it betrays the haste of guilt and sudden impulses of fear. These apartments could not have been thus abandoned and secured from entry for trifles, or for nothing.

Albert felt and acknowledged the justice of his speech; but farther could only feel surprized and look concerned. Although, on account of the time elapsed, no suspicion of his having acted in these deeds could attach to him, yet he well knew it might with reason be suspected that

he had known and concealed the guilt.

Having contemplated a while the scene before them, Grimoald said angrily, Let us proceed : I question, Duke Albert, if we shall not find here that which will terminate thy rule and power over these domains !

The Duke and Raymond asked an explanation.

Time, answered the Avenger, which shall uncover my shield, shall unfold these deeds ; shall prove thou art no longer lord or owner here : Another comes armed with the sword

of

of vengeance and the power of right:
till then thou reignest.

They could not persuade him to say more. Raymond was surprized, and Albert angry; but neither surprise or anger had any effect on Gri-moald, who, leaving the chamber, led to the way up stairs. Having ascended a long flight, they passed through several rooms; where nothing attracted their attention, and of which they left every door open as they proceeded, that they the more easily might discover through which they had been. They everywhere, as below, saw furniture remaining.

118 THE ANIMATED SKELETON.

This ghost-hunting is very unprofitable, said Raymond. We may as well go into the remaining chambers, said Albert.

True, added Grimoald; and there are others remaining, through which we have not yet been.

Thus saying, he attempted to open the door of a room they had just arrived at, but found resistance. Examining for the cause, he discovered it was locked on the out-side; but

no key remained whereby he could open it. The Duke told him he was determined to have it opened before he left that wing; and they went in

search

search of some instruments by which they could effect this purpose. Shortly they procured an iron implement which had been used for the fires; and, returning with it, Albert himself forced the door open. Here every thing seemed as in other places, until turning towards a couch, the Duke touching some clothes which covered it, observed how much good might have been done by distributing amongst the poor labourers of the forest the profusion of articles which he now beheld spoiled and rotting.

Disturb not the ashes of the departed!—exclaimed a hollow voice from the bed.

Sir Raymond advanced and drew his sword, and attempted to look under the clothes.

Again a voice exclaimed, Destroy not the repose of the dead !

What villain lurks there ? furiously cried Grimoald, and rushed forward immediately with the light, which he had carried all the way. A groan assailed his ear :—he tore off the coverings in a rage ;—something turned in the bed ; he advanced the light, saying, Speak, miscreant, and explain wherefore you are here !—holding the light close to it, he expected to behold some trembling imposture,

posture, or some hardened villain; but the hollow skull and dry bones of a skeleton met his eye. He started with the suddenness of the surprise, and, starting, dropped the lamp. In vain they attempted to restore the light; the last spark soon expired, and they were left in total darkness. Each drew his sword, but knew not whither they should turn; for one minute the cold feet of fear were felt creeping over their bodies, and their hearts beat quick.

Whither shall we go now? asked the Duke. We will open the windows, said the impetuous Grimoald,
in

in a rude tone; the star-light may direct us.

We will thank you to find them first, replied the milder Englishman.

After a few minutes they discovered where they were; Grimoald laid his hand upon an iron bar which crossed one of them, and was attempting to loosen it, when the hand of the skeleton fastened upon his arm, and a stern voice bid him quit the chambers, saying also, that the mysteries of those places were not for his discovery.—He again started, and in the action of receding, he found the hand

hand seem to unfasten from something, and fall upon the ground.

Not knowing what could be the cause of this, and ignorant of how many they might have to contend with, Raymond proposed retiring. We are in the dark, said he, and may in vain try to defend ourselves from enemies we cannot see.

True, said a voice which sounded near him; and to him who stays 'tis death. Let those who would be safe, follow yonder light.

Turning round, they saw at a great distance a small light illuminate the walls

walls of some chambers: they advanced towards it, but could see no person, because it was kept at so wide a distance as only to suffer them to behold the places through which it passed. It led them down some stairs, which they imagined were the same they had ascended by; after which it passed on through some rooms and a passage, and rested at the end. They then heard a great noise, like the letting down of heavy chains; and entering the passage, they viewed the light shine on some folding doors.—Depart through those doors, said the voice behind them.—They turned, to see from whence it came; but all being utter darkness, they perceived
nothing:

nothing: they therefore went up to the doors, and the light which had turned up another passage now disappeared. They opened them, as they were unfastened, and found themselves in the open air. The doors immediately closed upon them.—We are now again within the court, said the Duke: but they speedily discovered they were deceived; they walked forward, but found their passage interrupted by weeds, briars, and broken stones; neither did the stars give the light which Grimoald promised, as a cloudy sky had obscured them. Sometimes the ground was damp and swampy. — We cannot proceed, said Raymond; the darkness of the night prevents

prevents our finding the way, and we may get into the river which flows at the back of the castle; whither I suspect we are now come. So saying, he turned to go back, and beheld a light on high, nearly, as he could judge, on the turrets of the castle. — There is our perfidious director, said Raymond.

“Be polite, and do not call names, English knight. Leave that to great Grimoald,” said a voice from above them.

“Descend, foul fiend, and take us from this gloom,” holla’d Grimoald.—

“Your

"Your epithets are not encouraging," replied the voice.

"Damnation!" exclaimed Grimoald; "are we to be made the objects of a villain's trifling!"

"You are too warm: the river is near, jump in and cool yourself."

"If you do not come down, by hell and all its furies, you shall repent."

"Come up, and make me, great Grimoald the Avenger! Come, and hunt the owls and rats."

Grimoald

Grimoald was conscious he could not, therefore raved the more.

“Be tamer. Good night, ghost-hunter!” said the teizing goblin.—

Grimoald swore in vain: the cold made it an unpleasant situation for the Duke and Raymond; and although they were in the same situation as the Avenger, yet they could not help heartily laughing at his anger, and threatening the ghost. This did not serve to appease him; for he began more loudly to rail.—“If I could catch the rascally dog, I would wring his neck off,” said he.

“Good

“ Good night,” said the voice,
close to him.

Grimoald dashed his weapon around on all sides, aiming at the ghost. Scarcely could his companions escape his fury, until, pacing round in great anger, he sunk in a swamp ! He cried out to them for assistance ; but as he kept struggling, and still hewing the air, they chose not to venture near. His action only made him sink the deeper.

“ This ghost-hunting is a pleasant affair,” said Raymond ; “ and, were it not for our participation of it, I
VOL. I. K should

should like to see a little of it every night.'

For some time the enraged Avenger would not consent to be quiet: they therefore let him stick a little, meanwhile some voices sung near him,

Now to the goddesses of the night

We'll consecrate this angry wight;

And when he's roasted red with ire,

Hence we'll tear him,

Then we'll bear him

Down to our Satanic Sire!

A dismal yelling succeeded, and Grimoald the Avenger promised to be very pacific as well as quiet, if the Duke and knight would extricate him from

from the swamp. This they did, being nearly as much surprized as himself at the adventures of the evening, but much more diverted. As soon as he was released, the voices again sung,

Glorious Grimoald, deign to say,

Wilt thou in the castle stay,

Hunt the ghosts, or run away?

When other beings love to sleep,

Wilt thou in thy chamber keep,

Or come here at ghosts to peep?

Son of Anafleda, say,

If to hell thou'lt wing thy way?

Speak ! we can no longer stay.

‘ On my word,’ said Raymond;
‘ these are the merriest devils I ever
met with : we have none such in Eng-
land.’

Albert, who though he might for a moment when surprize had suspended consideration, experience the first attacks of fear, had in the main too much good sense to believe in goblins: all the superstition of the age could not convince him there were any such beings; he was therefore not at all sorry at the curious adventure of Grimoald, whose conduct had been far from polite. He suspected it was some trick of the inhabitants of the castle, who had overheard their intention of visiting these rooms.

Grimoald began to upbraid the Duke for the whole of it, taxing him
with

with being the contriver. This, said Albert, is easily contradicted: for, had not your fears made you drop the lamp, we should have seen our way safely out of the castle. All we have now to do is to rest in peace, until the morning shews us how we may escape.

The next morning found all the three adventurers (wearing, shivering, grumbling, and laughing: and the light convinced them it was as Raymond suspected; they were at the back of the castle, but they in vain sought for the folding doors through which they had been brought thither; nothing of the kind appeared. At

this Raymond laughed more than ever, and requested earnestly that the Duke would send Grimoald to hunt ghosts again the ensuing night. They found the place in which the Avenger had stuck was a muddy ditch which went round part of the old buildings, and communicated with the river.

As soon as possible they re-entered the castle, unseen by any one but the old porter, who much wondered to see them on the out-side; but was commanded by the Duke to say nothing of it.

Now then, having no further intelligence to give you, I must retire;

ere

ere long Albert will be here :—have courage, and shew your innocence by your regular and connected answers to all the questions they may chuse to put to you ; but especially speak slow, that you may recollect all you have answered to their first enquiries ; so that should you be asked the same question over again, you may be able to give the same answer. Let truth rule every word ; no double questioning then can ever injure.

This said, Grodern departed ; and soon after the arrival of Duke Albert, Brunchilda and their train were announced. Albert demanded that the

nave of the convent-church should be given them, to try the accused party in. He contended, that a judgment upon life or death was a business too solemn to profane that place: It was a matter in which every man concerned should appeal to Heaven, and on the mercy of God fix his reliance: God alone, said he, can prove who is innocent or guilty; therefore no place can be more proper than his dwelling, and in his presence.

They assembled in the nave; then were led forth Jacquemar and Edgar, the wife of Grodern, and the young children. "And are these innocents included

included in the crime?" asked Albert, fighting.

Yes, yes, said Brunchilda, all of the guilty race.—Take them hence, said the Duke, they surely must be free.—A smile irradiated the sorrowful countenance of Jacquemar at the release of his children; and a tear trembled in each eye as he fell on his knees to thank his master.

Rise, young man, said Albert, I am come hither to do justice; your children could not be guilty; or even had they dipped their hands in the blood of Conrad, yet they must be ignorant of their crime. He only
can

can be called an offender against the laws, who knows what those laws are against which he has offended.

Indeed then, most noble prince, replied the simple Jacquemar, I knew not it was a crime when I killed Conrad.

"He is guilty, he is guilty," joyfully exclaimed Brunchilda; "hear himself acknowledge it."

The Duke made no reply: he was so much surprised by the great simplicity of the man, that he knew not what answer to make.

Sir

Sir Raymond, fearing it would pass off in this manner, arose, and addressing Albert, said he hoped it was not the law in those territories to pass sentence on a man from his own accusation, before he had given in his defence.

He has said he is guilty, said Brunchilda, and what want we more?

His reasons for having been so, madam.

Albert turning to Brunchilda, with a more severe countenance than was usual, said, Madam, I came here to do justice, not to feed revenge; and

I com-

command silence.—Where is Gro-

dern?

The abbess answered the Duke, that she actually knew not. Un-

usual as it was for ladies of her situa-
tion to mix with knights and the
gay trains of courts, she also was
obliged to be present by the express
order of Albert, whom she could
not disobey.

And now the accusers of the party
being called for, Edward and two
men came forward, saying they were
ready. Edward spoke for them. He
declared that Jacquemar, Grodern,
and his son, accompanied by Duni-
fleda,

fleda, were returning to their cottages, when they overtook two men belonging to the household of the Duke, but in the particular service of Brunchilda: that Dunifleda separated from the party, and joined the two men, trying by her arts and wanton allurements to draw them home: that they resented her behaviour, and refused to accompany her.

Oh God! cried Jacquemar, clasping his hands, what cruel falsehoods!

Silence, said the Duke, or we shall think you guilty.—

I cannot

I cannot be silent ! indeed I cannot !—my poor Dunifleda is gone ! she is dead ! she died all by their cruelty ! and now they tell such lies !—

Young man, when your accuser has said all he can against you, you will be allowed to say all you can against him : but if we have any more interruptions, we will directly condemn you.

The accuser continued :—

The others came up and attempted to murder them at the same time, bidding them deliver up all they had about them ; declaring they knew
they

they had money ; that he (the accuser) came up, and being armed, rescued them : that the accused then fled ; that they in their flight met and murdered Conrad, the servant of Brunchilda, and had murdered, robbed, and buried him near the convent.

To this the two men then swore also.

Have you any more to say ? asked Albert. He was answered, No.

Jacquemar was then suffered to give his defence ; which having done, the Duke arose, and said he should

now

now give his judgment : — That the tale of the accused seemed more probable than that of the accuser ; and he could not call them guilty : but that it should rest upon the opinion of three of the oldest men present. Two of these declared them innocent ; but the third desired that the accused should be searched, to discover if they had any thing which had belonged to Conrad about them.

Brunchilda now desired to speak.

I had given, said she, to Conrad that morning a small bag of money and a cross of jewels to carry to the abbey of ——— : neither of which
were

were found on the body; because, along with his clothes, these murderers had taken the cross and bag.

Jacquemar, happy to find his fate depend upon what he thought was sure to prove his innocence, gladly called upon them to come and search him:—he was searched; but neither money nor jewels had the poor cottager.

The son of Grodern was next to be examined.

Most noble Duke, said Edgar, save yourself the time and trouble; pronounce us innocent, for neither

money nor jewels have I seen, though it was I who buried the body of Conrad.

They are surely innocent, said the Duke. — Let them be searched, said the lady. The son was searched; and in a fold of his garment was discovered a cross of jewels! — His ancient mother fainted! — Jacquemar stood aghast in silent agony. — The Duke sighed deeply!

Brunchilda smiled the smile of malice high triumphant; and the son of Grodern hung his head low, as if confusion. — For a while all were silent: some watching the emotions
of

of others—some buried in their own, until Edward stepped forward, demanding of the Duke if he wished for any other proof to find the miscreants guilty?—if this would not convince him, let him add the flight of Grodern, who, in all probability, had carried the money with him.

The Duke neither regarded him nor spoke: sorrow oppressed his heart; and he mourned for the depravity of a fellow-creature.

Now, hapless Edgar, what shall save thee from the malice of thy accuser? where shalt thou find a shelter from the overwhelming torrent? Ed-

gar, there is a Being who formed the poor and formed the mighty: he who guards the life of the human being, protects the emmet also!

Sir Raymond now arose, and again requested leave to interfere.

Brunchilda frowned upon him; for Brunchilda hated Raymond. She requested no strangers might have permission to interfere in her concerns.

Madam, replied Raymond, in a matter merely concerning yourself, perhaps it would be improper to interfere; but when the lives of several

veral of our fellow-creatures depend upon the single evidence of a favourite, or of people probably suborned by him, it is then time for every one to examine, and, if possible, preserve from death the unfortunate objects of accusation.

Sir Raymond, exclaimed Brunchilda, unable longer to continue silent, What meant you by my favourite?

Let the dark conferences of the evening explain my meaning: but more than that, this business shall not thus have an end.—To you then, Duke Albert, I appeal; and, in the

names of these unfortunate beings, demand a fair and equal trial. If this be refused me, I challenge you in their name; nor shall the field be quitted until one of us is slain, or justice rendered to the unfortunate.

The Duke, whose opinion of Brunchilda was at the lowest pitch, but yet who scorned suspicion, knowing it in general the mark of a little mind, declared (so earnest was he to save their lives) that he would suffer the knight to proceed in any manner he thought most just. He then commanded his fierce lady to obey.

Then,

Then, said Sir Raymond, the English knight, I command that all the party, both accusers and accused, be taken from this presence, and each placed in separate apartments until summoned to appear. The lady of Duke Albert must alone remain.

It was done as he desired.

And now, madam, I charge you by the high Lord of Heaven, by the God of mercy, truth, and justice, and by that Redeemer who was falsely accused, and whose sacred ensign I now present to you (at the same time drawing his sword, and present-

ing the cross thereof to Brunchilda) to swear that nothing but the truth entire shall have utterance; and that you will truly reply to such questions as I shall put unto you. I call upon you, madam, to consider you are in their presence, and will be finally by them adjudged.

Brunchilda, with her usual pride and impetuosity, refused to swear; and arose to quit the place.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.